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## Letter dated 13 September 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour of writing to you in your capacity as the President of the Security Council for the month of September 2006, and would like to draw the attention of the members of the Security Council to the recent anti-criminal operation in Upper Abkhazia/Upper Kodori Gorge of Abkhazia, Georgia.

Until the above-mentioned operation in Upper Abkhazia, the region was controlled by Emzar Kvitsiani, the commander of the local Monadire (literally, Hunter) militia force. There have also been strong suspicions about Kvitsiani's involvement in smuggling and other criminal activities and providing shelter to several criminals wanted by the Georgian police.

The recent crisis started in July 2006, when Kvitsiani rearmed his former militiamen, numbering up to 50, and proclaimed that he defied Georgia's central authorities and would resist any attempt by the authorities to disarm his militia groups.

On 25 July, the Government of Georgia dispatched a strong detachment of police forces to disarm the defiant paramilitary leader. Those forces were under the operational control of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia.

Prior to and during the course of the law enforcement operation in Upper Abkhazia, the Georgian authorities had permanent contacts with Abkhaz de facto authorities and Commonwealth of Independent States peacekeepers to prevent possible provocations that could have inflamed the situation.

At the same time, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia has been providing, on a regular basis, diplomatic representatives of foreign countries and missions of international organizations to Georgia with the most recent and unbiased information regarding the developments in Upper Abkhazia.

On 26 July 2006, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia commenced an anti-criminal operation in the area to disarm and arrest Emzar Kvitsiani and his supporters, who were threatening constitutional order and security of the state. The anti-criminal operation was carried out successfully in a short period of time. The police units disarmed illegal military formations and currently are searching for fugitives who are at large and for armaments.

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As a result of the operation, police officers have detained eight criminals wanted for murder and robbery. Six wanted criminals surrendered to police. Three persons, victims of trafficking, were released by local criminals, who forced them to work without any compensation. Police officers have detained eight persons for the illegal possession and carrying of guns. Guns and other firearms have also been seized from among the local population, a majority of who voluntarily handed them over to police. Police officers seized huge amounts of ammunition and different types of armoury and weapons from storehouses of Emzar Kvitsiani and his illegal formation.

According to the information at our disposal, Kvitsiani fled the Gorge and was given refuge by the Abkhaz separatist regime.

The Georgian Government has been avoiding drastic steps, in order not to escalate the situation in this sensitive area of the conflict zone. Due to the successful completion of the police operation, today the local population of Upper Abkhazia enjoys all the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Georgian Constitution, and receives all necessary aid and opportunities for proper health care, employment and education.

According to the decision of the President of Georgia, the only elected (currently Tbilisi-based) legitimate Government of Abkhazia is moving to Upper Abkhazia. The legitimate Government of Abkhazia — the Government of the people who were forced out of Abkhazia — will function in Upper Abkhazia supporting the local population in sustaining stability and implementing various projects aimed at rehabilitation of the area. Here I want to recall the recent statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, in which it referred to the Abkhaz separatist government as one elected "by people". I would like to stress that those "elections" were conducted with the participation of a very small part of the population of Abkhazia, Georgia, while a large majority of the population of Abkhazia, Georgia, were expelled from their places of residence as a result of the ethnic cleansing repeatedly confirmed and condemned at Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe summits in Budapest (1995), Lisbon (1997) and Istanbul (1999).

We are convinced that the restoration of law and order in Upper Abkhazia, including the activities of the legitimate Government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, which will be exercising full jurisdiction over the territory in question, will enhance stability in the conflict zone and advance further the peace process, which is wholly consistent with the interests of the Abkhaz side as well.

Immediately after the completion of the anti-criminal operation, the Government of Georgia launched social-economic rehabilitation projects in Upper Abkhazia — 70 tons of aid, mainly food, have already been delivered to the local population, about 150 locals have been employed at different new positions, two schools are being built and one is being refurbished. An airfield is being constructed to improve the connection between the rest of the country and this remote area, which is cut off from the rest of Georgia during the long winter season and is difficult to access even in summer. All bridges, 10 in total, across the Kodori Gorge are being rebuilt. The Ministry of Energy of Georgia has launched the construction of a hydroelectric power plant with a total capacity of 250 megawatts in the village of Omarishara, Upper Abkhazia. Reconstruction of the main road in the Kodori

Gorge is set to begin this autumn, with the projected costs of 7 million Georgian lari (approximately $4.1 million).

I would also like to underline that, with the conclusion of the operation, a substantial contingent of law enforcement forces have already left the Gorge.

In conclusion, I would like to note that the restoration of order and security in the Gorge would create the necessary prerequisites for the United Nations to conduct monitoring in the area, which came to a halt three years ago for security reasons. Soon after the successful completion of the anti-criminal operation, the Georgian side expressed its readiness to take all necessary measures for the resumption of United Nations monitoring in Upper Kodori Gorge.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Irakli **Alasania**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative